

This is a Tonglen Guided Meditation Practice from Buddhism Guide.

In this meditation, we will be breathing in the suffering of others, and breathing out our heartfelt compassion to them. You are turning to face suffering and not running away from it. For this practice to be effective, it needs to be done regularly. So, sit comfortably with your back straight and your eyes lightly closed.

Now let's start the meditation.

(3 bells)

I want you to breath in as deeply as you can through your nose – hold the breath – and then push all the air out through your mouth – so, let's begin - breath in deeply – hold – push the air out – breath in deeply – hold – push all the air out - breath in deeply – hold – push all the air out.

Now sit quietly and bring your awareness to the breath entering and leaving your body. Make sure you breathe normally and your breath is slow and relaxed.

(30 seconds)

While you are slowly breathing, I will introduce this meditation practice to you. Negative thinking causes us to make poor choices, so by doing this meditation you will be letting go of negativity, opening your heart and developing critical thinking that will lead you to make wise choices. The meditation also helps you deal effectively with difficult people and stressful situations. You will be replacing negativity with compassion and wisdom, which will help heal yourself, each other and the world.

(30 seconds)

You start this meditation with focusing on yourself, and then moving on to someone you love, a neutral person, someone you dislike and finally, the world.

Let's begin.... As you breathe in, let desire, anger, jealousy, fear, attachment, confusion or some other negative emotion come to the surface..... on your out breath, breathe out this negative thinking, and fill the empty space with your heartfelt compassion.

(30 seconds)

Breath in your negative thinking and then breath it out again.... fill the void that is left with your compassion.

(30 seconds)

Appreciate that you want to be happy, but your negative thinking causes you to make poor choices that lead to suffering. By letting go of negative thinking and developing compassion toward yourself, you will be free to make wise choices that lead to happiness.

(30 seconds)

Negative thinking closes the heart, upsets the balance in your life and leads to illness and suffering. Whereas, compassion opens the heart, brings about balance and promotes health and happiness.

(30 seconds)

Now turn your attention to someone you love. Recall a time when your loved one was suffering or maybe they're suffering now. Breathe in their suffering, and breathe out your heartfelt compassion to them.

(30 seconds)

Appreciate that your loved one wants to be happy, but is suffering instead. Fully open your heart to your loved one.

(30 seconds)

Now think of a neutral person, someone about whom you know nothing. It may be a neighbour, someone you see every day in the street, a bus driver or a shop assistant. Think about how this person is suffering through sickness or poor choices. Breathe in their suffering, and breathe out your compassion to this person.

(30 seconds)

Appreciate that this person wants to be happy, but is suffering instead. Open your heart to this neutral person.

(30 seconds)

Now think of a person you dislike or someone you think has hurt you breathe in the suffering of this person -- and breathe out your warm compassion to them.

(30 seconds)

Appreciate that this person, like everyone else, wants to be happy. Because of negative thinking, this person makes harmful choices that lead to suffering. By having negative thoughts about this person, you are increasing that suffering, and making the situation worse. Develop compassion for this person, so you can think clearly about how to deal with them in a way that brings about good consequences. Fully open your heart to this person.

(30 seconds)

Now breathe in the suffering of the world.....and breathe out compassion to the whole world. Breathe in all the sadness, poverty, sickness, intolerance, loneliness and all other negativity in the world....and breathe out all the compassion your heart can muster, to help heal the world.

(30 seconds)

Everyone in the world wants to be happy, but too often make unwise choices that lead to suffering instead. Appreciate that by developing universal compassion, you can help to relieve this suffering. Open your heart to the world.

(30 seconds)

Now you are coming to the end of this meditation, and it is time to do a purification practice. I want you to visualize the suffering you breathed in as black smoke in your heart centre. You need to let go of this black smoke, so it doesn't increase your own suffering. As you breathe out imagine all the black smoke leaving your heart centre. Then, on the in breath, breathe in the pure white smoke of compassion.

Let this white smoke fill your heart centre and your whole being with compassion toward yourself, everyone else and the world.

(30 seconds)

Continue to do the purification by breathing in white smoke of compassion and breathing out the black smoke of suffering.

(30 seconds)

In a moment, you will hear the final 3 bells. Gently follow the sound of the bells. Then, when you are ready, slowly open your eyes and introduce yourself back into the world.

(Ring 3 bells)